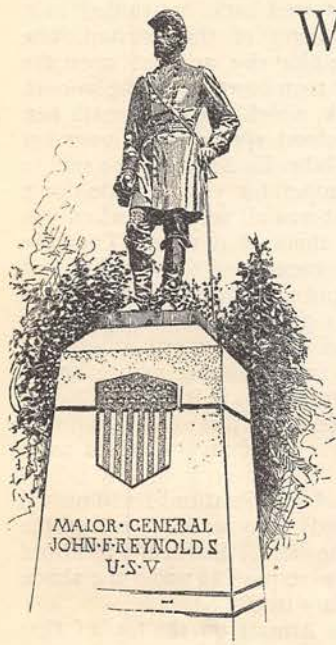


HOOKER'S APPOINTMENT AND REMOVAL.

BY AN OFFICER WHO OCCUPIED RESPONSIBLE AND CONFIDENTIAL POSITIONS AT THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE ARMY OF THE POTOMAC, AND IN THE WAR DEPARTMENT.



MONUMENT IN THE GETTYSBURG CEMETERY.

WHEN, after the Mud March that succeeded the disaster of Fredericksburg, General Burnside, in a fit of humiliation, telegraphed to Washington requesting, for the second time, to be relieved, the question of his successor was already being considered as a probability. Though stung by the loud roar that went up for McClellan from the army that had twice met disaster after parting with him, the cabinet were not shaken in the conclusion that McClellan must not be restored, for the jocund Seward, equally with the patient Lincoln, drew the line at a military dictatorship, such as would be practically implied by a second restoration, under such pressure. But while firm, the authorities were circumspect, and concluded that it would not be prudent to increase the tension between themselves and a possible pretorian camp by sending an outsider to take the command from Burnside. Subject to this conclusion, General Halleck and Secretary Stanton favored the transfer of Rosecrans, for whom McClellan might be expected to pass around a good word to supplement his inherent strength as a repeatedly victorious commander.

The choice being narrowed to the Army of the Potomac, a process of exclusion began.

* I have been told recently, on hearsay testimony, that Sedgwick was sounded and said he ought not to be appointed because he was a McClellan man. I never heard that Sedgwick was ever proposed as successor to Burnside, and I cannot believe it, knowing the *limited* though warm regard of Secretary Stan-

ton for him. Stanton always spoke of Sedgwick as a brave, thorough-going soldier, who staid in camp, gave Washington a wide berth, and did not intrigue against his superiors; but I never heard him attribute to Sedgwick such high qualities for a great command as he imputed to some other officers of that army. Franklin was under a cloud and decidedly out of the question; Sumner had many qualifications, but his age and growing feebleness were beyond remedy; Couch was a possible second, and still more likely third choice, and, briefly, the selection was found to lie among Hooker, Reynolds, and Meade.* The first-named had a strong, popular lead, but General Halleck, backed up by the Secretary of War, contended that there were reasons of an imperative character why he should not be intrusted with an independent command of so high a degree of responsibility. Stress was laid upon the fact that in his dispositions for the attack on Marye's Heights, General Burnside, who could at that time have had no valid motive for jealousy of Hooker, had intrusted him with no important part, although he was present on the field and of equal rank with Sumner and Franklin, to whom the active duties of the battle were assigned. President Lincoln apparently yielded to the views of those in charge of the military department of affairs, and thereupon Halleck confidentially inquired of Reynolds if he was prepared to accept the command. Reynolds replied that he expected to obey all lawful orders coming to his hands, but as the communication seemed to imply the possession of an option in himself, he deemed it his duty to say frankly that he could not accept the command in a voluntary sense, unless a liberty of action should be guaranteed to him considerably beyond any which he had reason to expect. He was thereupon dropped, and the choice further and finally restricted to Hooker and Meade, with the chances a hundred to one in favor of the latter by reason of the fixed conviction of the Secretary of War that the former ought not, in any contingency, to be chosen.

Hooker and Meade were in camp, attending to such military duties as the lull of action gave occasion for, neither having taste nor talent for intrigue, each aware that "something" was afoot, but both supposing that the ferment concerned Hooker and Reynolds, and, pos-

ton for him. Stanton always spoke of Sedgwick as a brave, thorough-going soldier, who staid in camp, gave Washington a wide berth, and did not intrigue against his superiors; but I never heard him attribute to Sedgwick such high qualities for a great command as he imputed to some other officers of that army.

sibly, some third man beyond the lines of the army. But there were men about Hooker who believed in, and hoped to rise with him, and who, at all events, could afford to take the chances of success or failure with him; and these men were rich in personal and external resources of the kinds needed for the combination of political, financial, and social forces to a common end. By their exertions, such influences had been busy for Hooker ever since the recent battle, greatly aided by the unselfish labor of earnest men who believed that Hooker's military reputation (the pugnacious disposition implied in his popular cognomen of "Fighting Joe"), and his freedom from suspicion of undue attachment to the fortunes of General McClellan, pointed him out as the man for the occasion by the unerring processes of natural selection. The attitude and character of the Secretary of War, however, justified nothing but despair until connection was made with a powerful faction which had for its object the elevation of Mr. Chase to the Presidency at the end of Mr. Lincoln's term. Making every allowance for the strength and availability of Mr. Chase, as against Mr. Lincoln or any other civilian candidate, his friends did not conceal from themselves that the conqueror of the rebellion would have the disposal of the next Presidency, and they were on the look-

out for the right military alliance when they came into communication with Hooker's friends and received their explanations, that, if it should be his good fortune to bring the war to a successful close, nothing could possibly induce him to accept other than military honors in recognition of his services. General Hooker thereupon became the candidate of Mr. Chase's friends.

As soon as Burnside's tenure of the command had become a question rather of hours than of days, new efforts were made to win over the Secretary of War, but necessarily without avail, because, apart from any personal considerations that may have had place in his mind, he had certain convictions on the subject of a kind which strong men never abandon when once formed. At this critical moment the needed impulse in the direction of Hooker

was supplied by a person of commanding influence in the councils of the administration, and Mr. Lincoln directed the appointment to be made.

Mr. Stanton's first conclusion was that he should resign; his second, that duty to his chief and the public forbade his doing so; his third, that Hooker must be loyally supported so long as there was the least chance of his doing anything with the army placed in his keeping. This latter resolution he faithfully kept, and General Hooker, who soon had occasion to know the facts connected with his appointment, was both surprised at and touched by the generous conduct of his lately implacable opponent.

Mr. Chase found his situation as sponsor for the new commander embarrassing. As a member of the cabinet he could freely express



BREAKING UP THE UNION CAMP AT FALMOUTH.

his views with reference to any military question coming up for cabinet discussion, or, upon any matter introduced to him by the President he had fair opportunity of making a desired impression; but further than this he could not directly go without disclosing a personal interest inconsistent with his place and duty. Yet the circumstances connected with the appointment of Hooker made it imperatively necessary that the influence of Mr. Chase should be exerted in respect of matters which could not formally come to him for consideration, although, on the other hand, they could not safely be intrusted wholly to the keeping of a suspicious and probably hostile War Department. Fortunately for the perplexed statesman, the influence which had proved sovereign when the balance had hung in suspense between Hooker and Meade was safely

and wholly at his service, and, being again resorted to, provided a *modus vivendi* so long as one was needed. Out of all these anomalies a correspondence resulted between Mr. Chase and General Hooker, the publication of which is historically indispensable to the saying of the final word in respect of the leading events of Mr. Lincoln's administration.

When General Hooker telegraphed to Washington that he had brought his army back to the north side of the river, because he could not find room for it to fight at Chancellorsville, President Lincoln grasped General Halleck and started for the front post-haste. He would likewise have taken the Secretary of War, in his anxiety, but for the obvious indelicacy of the latter's appearance before Hooker at such a moment. Mr. Lincoln went back to Washington that night, enjoining upon Halleck to remain till he knew "everything." Halleck was a keen lawyer, and the reluctant generals and staff-officers had but poor success in stopping anywhere short of the whole truth. When he got back to his post, a conference of the President and Secretary of War with himself was held at the War Department, whereat it was concluded that both the check at Chancellorsville and the retreat were inexcusable, and that Hooker must not be intrusted with the conduct of another battle. Halleck had brought a message from Hooker to the effect that as he had never sought the command he could resign it without embarrassment and would be only too happy if, in the new arrangement, he could have the command of his old division and so keep in active service.

The friends of Mr. Chase considered that the fortunes of their leader were too much bound up with Hooker to permit of the latter's ignominious removal and, although the President had learned much that he did not dream of at the time he parted company with the War Department in the matter of appointing a successor to Burnside, the Treasury faction had grown so powerful that he could not consent to a rupture with it, and a temporizing policy was adopted all around, which General Couch, commander of the Second Corps, all unconsciously, nearly spoiled by contemptuously refusing to serve any longer under Hooker, despite the latter's abject appeal to him not to leave the army.

Mr. Stanton was for having it out with the Chase party at once, and a disposition on the part of Hooker to arrange for a further movement against Lee presenting an opportunity, he caused Halleck, in his character of General-in-Chief, to notify Hooker that he must make no movement, nor changes in the dispositions of his army, without obtaining prior approval from himself. Hooker was greatly annoyed

by the receipt of this relentless dispatch, but he had parted with his freedom of action, and those who had made themselves responsible for him had not yet found a way of letting him go without falling with him. Their dilemma became that of the nation, and so the army lay idle while the campaign season was at its height.

General Lee's invasion of Pennsylvania broke up the nearly intolerable situation, and Hooker's diligent and skillful management of his army rapidly brought matters back to the hopeful state they were in before the late battle. But Mr. Stanton was determined that the deliberate decision of the council of war, held after Halleck's return from the front, should not be set aside, and he was now the master of the situation. Hooker was so full of hope and energy that severe measures had to be resorted to in order to wring from him that tender of resignation deemed to be necessary to enable his supporters at Washington to keep on outward terms with the administration. When it did come, the impending battle was evidently so close at hand that the Secretary of War was seized with the fear that, either by accident or design, the change of command to General Meade would not be effected in time to avoid the very contingency aimed at by the change. At the last moment the President too became alarmed, and there was another conference in the council-room at the Department to settle the means of insuring the transfer.

Duplicate copies of the President's order changing the command were made, authenticated by the signature of the adjutant-general and addressed, severally, to Generals Hooker and Meade. Colonel Hardie, chief of the staff of the Secretary of War and a personal friend of both the officers concerned, was then called into the conference room and directed to start at once for Frederick City and, without disclosing his presence or business, make his way to General Meade and give him to understand that the order for him to assume the command of the army immediately was intended to be as unquestionable and peremptory as any which a soldier could receive. He was then, as the representative of the President, to take General Meade to the headquarters of General Hooker and transfer the command from the latter to the former. Colonel Hardie manifested some reluctance to doing his appointed task in the prescribed manner, but Mr. Stanton sententiously remarked that in this case the manner was of the substance of the matter, to which Mr. Lincoln added that he would take the responsibility upon himself for any wound to the feelings of the two generals, or of the bearer of the order.



MAJOR-GENERAL GEORGE G. MEADE. (FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY BRADY.)

Colonel Hardie was supplied with passes and orders to facilitate his progress, and with money to buy his way through to his destination if delayed or obstructed on the road. If compelled by the imminency of capture by Stuart's raiders to destroy his papers, and he could still make his way through, he was to deliver verbally the order for the changing of the command and supervise its execution.

Colonel Hardie got safely to Frederick, and by diligent inquiry ascertained the whereabouts of General Meade's headquarters, several miles from town. By some oversight at headquarters, no governor or provost marshal had been appointed for the town, and the streets

and all the roads leading to the camps were thronged with boisterous soldiers, more or less filled with Maryland whisky, and many of them ripe for rudeness or mischief. By liberal use of money he at last obtained a buggy and a driver who knew the roads, but his progress through straggling parties of soldiers and trains of wagons was so slow, and he was so often obliged to appeal to officers to secure passage and safety from one stage to another that the night was far spent when he reached General Meade's headquarters and, after some wrangling, penetrated to his tent.

Meade was asleep, and when awakened was confounded by the sight of an officer from

the War Department standing over him. He afterwards said that, in his semi-stupor, his first thought was that he was to be taken to Washington in arrest, though no reason occurred to him why he should be. When he realized the state of affairs he became much agitated, protesting against being placed in command of an army which was looking towards Reynolds as the successor, if Hooker should be displaced; referring to the personal friendship between Reynolds and himself which would make the President's order an instrument of injustice to both; urging the heaviness of the responsibility so suddenly placed upon him, in presence of the enemy and when he was totally ignorant of the positions and dispositions of the army he was to take in charge; and strenuously objecting to the re-

quirement that he should go to Hooker's headquarters to take over the command without being sent for by the commanding-general as McClellan had sent for Burnside and the latter for Hooker. It was a mental relief to the stern Secretary of War, when General Meade's spontaneous utterances were reported to him, to note that he had uttered no protest against Hooker's being relieved of the command, even in what might almost be called the presence of the enemy. This silence on the part of a man so regardless of himself, so regardful of others, Mr. Stanton accepted as being, in itself, his complete vindication.

After taking Colonel Hardie's opinion, as a professional soldier, that he had no lawful discretion to vary from the orders given, horses and an escort were ordered out and the party proceeded to general headquarters, some miles distant. Hardie undertook to break the news to Hooker, who did not need to be told anything after seeing who his visitors were. It was a bitter moment to all, for Hooker had construed favorably the delay in responding to his tender of resignation, and could not wholly mask the revulsion of feeling. General Butterfield, the chief of staff, between whom and General Meade much coldness existed, was called in, and the four officers set themselves earnestly to work to do the state some service by honestly transferring the command and all that could help to make it available for good. Tension was somewhat eased by Meade's insisting upon being regarded as a guest at headquarters while General Hooker was present, and by his requesting General Butterfield, upon public grounds, not to exercise his privilege of withdrawing with his chief; but Hooker's chagrin and Meade's overstrung nerves made the lengthy but indispensable conference rather trying to the whole party.

When Reynolds heard the news, he dressed himself with scrupulous care and, handsomely attended, rode to headquarters to pay his respects to the new commander. Meade, who looked like a wagon-master in the marching clothes he had hurriedly slipped on when awakened in his tent, understood the motive of the act, and after the exchange of salutations all around, he took Reynolds by the arm, and, leading him aside, told him how surprising, imperative, and unwelcome were the orders he had received; how much he would have preferred the choice to have fallen on Reynolds; how anxious he had been to see Reynolds and tell him these things, and how helpless he should hold himself to be did he not feel that Reynolds would give him the earnest support which he would have given to Reynolds in a like situation. Reynolds



GENERAL MEADE IN THE FIELD. (FROM A PHOTOGRAPH.)



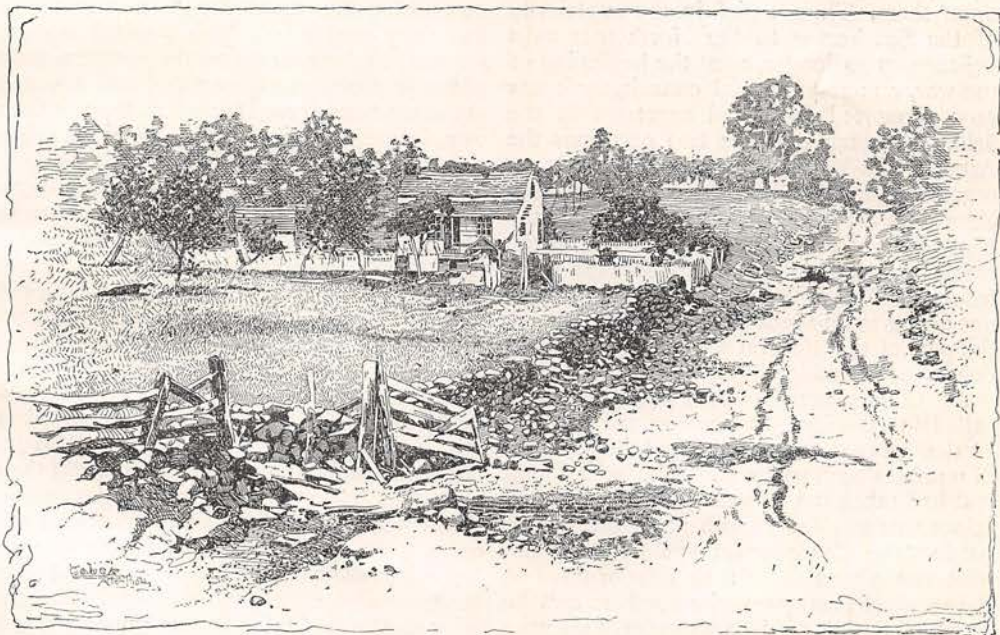
BRIGADIER-GENERAL HENRY J. HUNT,
CHIEF OF ARTILLERY OF THE ARMY OF THE POTOMAC.
(FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY BRADY.)

answered that, in his opinion, the command had fallen where it belonged, that he was glad that such a weight of responsibility had not come upon him, and that Meade might

count upon the best support he could give him. Meade then communicated to Reynolds all that he had learned from Hooker and Butterfield concerning the movements and positions of the two armies, and hastily concerted with him a plan of coöperation which resulted in the fighting of the battle of Gettysburg upon ground selected by Reynolds.

During the afternoon the consultations were ended and, with the aid of the representative of the War Department, the two generals drew up the orders which were to announce formally the change of command. In the evening, standing in front of the commanding general's tent, General Hooker took leave of the officers, soldiers, and civilians attached to headquarters, and amid many a "God bless you, General!" got into the spring wagon that was to convey him and Colonel Hardie to the railroad station *en route* to Washington. When all was ready for the start, the throng about the vehicle respectfully drew back as Meade approached with uncovered head; the two men took each other by the hand, some words passed between them in a low tone, the wagon moved off, and Meade walked silently into the tent just vacated by his predecessor.

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GENERAL MEADE'S HEADQUARTERS ON THE TANEYTOWN ROAD. (FROM A WAR-TIME PHOTOGRAPH.)

General Meade arrived at Cemetery Hill at one o'clock in the morning of July 2d, and after daylight established his headquarters in a small farm-house on the Taneytown road, little more than an eighth of a mile east of Hancock's line of battle, which was the Union center. In the afternoon of July 2d, headquar-

ters became the center of a heavy artillery fire which caused a scattering of officers and staffs and the headquarters signal corps. During the terrific cannonade which preceded Pickett's charge on July 3d, Meade's headquarters received a still greater storm of shot and shell, with the same result.—EDITOR.